

CHAPTER 6

LEVELS OF THE ANALYSIS OF TRUST IN PUBLIC ORGANISATIONS

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Introduction

Public institutions' activities are strictly determined by provisions of the law. But foreordained procedures cannot secure trust in a public institution. Nowadays, trust is considered to be an indispensable element of building relations between various entities. The necessity to build trust concerns also the public sector. An appropriate level of trust in an institution providing public services enables creating positive relationships between this institution and its stakeholders. Trust is related to the subjective probability that the entity or person with whom we work will perform the assigned task adequately and that this action will not be harmful (Gambetta, 1988, pp. 213-238). Building an organisation's credibility is influenced by numerous factors. Notable among them are: competences, intentions, predictability, results, and honesty. The objective of this study is to indicate the levels of the analysis of trust in public organisations. Trust seems to be the key factor which enables the achievement of success, understood in the broadest sense as meeting the needs of an organisation's stakeholders. The study indicates the features of a trust-based public organisation. Types of trust that can be built by organisations operating in the public sector were presented. Trust is considered as a management tool (management through trust), which will result in the achievement of the objective. Trust can be also the result of the actions of the organisation.

The paper was prepared based on the analysis of the literature and the review of data concerning trust in institutions operating in the public sector.

The significance of trust in public organisations

Trust is an element of an individual's functioning within society, and one of cultural features that initiates soft factors of success. It is often indicated that trust creates favourable conditions for effective cooperation. It is more than

a buzzword and it can contribute to the achievement of set goals (Konopka, 2015, p. 25). The literature contains numerous definitions of trust. According to A. Lewicka-Strzałecka (2016), trust is a belief that the other party shares our values and adheres to the norms, and that they will work to our benefit, or at least not to our detriment (Lewicka-Strzałecka, 2016). Such a conviction can be expressed, among others, toward a person, institution, company or other type of organisation. Trust facilitates starting a relationship, because it increases the subjective conviction of both sides about the possibility of its success. R. Hardin points out that trust is an emotion expressed toward various objects. It is connected with the faith in good intentions of the entity which we trust. Moreover, we believe that the subject of our trust is capable of achieving what we expect of them (Hardin, 2009, p. 25). Therefore, trust means readiness to take actions based on an expectation that people and institutions will be acting in a manner beneficial for us. Trust is always connected with the conviction that the other party of the relationship is honest in their intentions and actions toward a given entity.

According to F. Fukuyama, trust is a mechanism based on the assumption that other members of a certain community are characterised by honest and co-operative behaviours based on mutually shared rules (Fukuyama, 1997, p. 38). Therefore, the foundations of trust are norms observed by all members of a particular community or organisation. Meanwhile, P. Sztompka believes that trust is “a bet about the future”. It is not only the hope, but it also involves commitment, and making a decision that contains risk. If we trust someone, it means that we expect that their actions will be beneficial for us, or at least that they will not be harmful (Sztompka, 2007, pp. 309-310). According to Sztompka, trust is not only a belief or a conviction, but it also involves taking action and risk – by trusting someone, you are ready to work with them, without always being certain that it will end successfully (Sztompka, 2007, pp. 310-311).

Trust may be regarded and analysed from various perspectives. Most often trust is analysed as: the element of social capital, foundation of social interactions, resource of an organisation, expectation of future actions of other persons or groups, and as relationships within a particular organisation. Trust is voluntary, since partners in the relationship make the decision themselves whether to trust other parties in the relationship. Trust involves risk, because each party must take into account the possibility of their partner’s dishonesty and uncertainty of the realisation of the relationship’s outcome. The important aspect of trust is the fact that it cannot be gained permanently. Trust is dynamic and it changes with time, which means that it can be lost at any point. Moreover, it is built based on experiences and knowledge not only of the entity that wants to trust, but also other entities.

The act of trusting consists of taking actions connected with the expectation that people and institutions will be acting in a manner beneficial for us. Trust is always connected with the conviction that the other party of the relationship is honest in their intentions and actions toward the given entity. The table below presents definitions of trust from the perspective of organisational management.

Table 6.1 Definitions of trust from the perspective of organisational management

| Author | Definition |
|--|--|
| Paliszkiewicz 2013 | Trust is a belief that the other party will not act against us, will be reliable, will act predictably and in a manner beneficial for us |
| Sankowska 2011 | Trust is the readiness to become sensitive to other party's actions, based on the assessment of their credibility in the situation of co-dependence and risk |
| Grudzewski, Hejduk, Sankowska, Wańtuchowicz 2008 | Trust is a directed relationship between two individuals, one of which is trusting, and the other one – the trustee. Trust manifests in the situation of dependence between the one who trusts and the trustee, which is marked by risk. |
| Gambetta 1988 | Trust is a resource that is supposed to contribute to achieving economic results, It plays an important role in the economic life and enables the execution of an effective market exchange. |
| Mayer, Davis, Schoorman 1995 | Trust is the readiness to accept other party's behaviours without the need to control and monitor behaviours; we are ready to take the risk. |
| Hardin 2009 | To trust someone means believing that the person is driven by good intentions and is capable of what we expect of them. |

Source: own work based on Paliszkiewicz, 2013; Kapuściak, 2015; Hardin, 2009, p. 25.

The level of trust depends on the features of a particular community (the so-called tendency to trust), and moral principles of particular communities. The literature features various levels of trust analysis, according to which trust is regarded as (Grudzewski et al., p. 22; Lewicka, Książek, Krot, pp. 41-56):

- a disposition (individual expectations) related to the subjective attitude toward the other party. It consists of issuing a certain assessment or predicting certain behaviours. It involves confiding, renouncing control in favour of trust, the belief in the stability of the social order, competence and standards of people in whom we confide.
- an emotion expressed toward various recipients of trust, linked to the belief that the trusted person (entity), has good intentions and is capable of performing the action we expect of them.
- a decision, or intention, connected with relying on a certain subject of trust (subject or object), which makes the trusting party dependant on the other party,
- behaviour that stems from the act of entrusting oneself to the other party.

- social structure where trust has not only individual, but also social character. Interactions are complex, creating networks of trust, strengthened by the history of relations and norms shared by a particular group.

Trust analysis allows distinguishing determinants that shape its creation. Usually, the following elements are listed: competence, risk, credibility, responsibility, good will, kindness, predictability, and reliability. From the perspective of the organisation's operations, trust is one of the key factors determining the achievement of the intended objective and development of the organisation, and it constitutes its intangible asset. It builds positive relations both within a particular organisation, and with its external environment. Another aspect, which is often indicated, is the importance of trust for the improvement of efficiency and speed of functioning as well as creation of a positive image of a particular entity.

Regardless of the adopted definition, perception, or selected bundle of traits, advantages related to trust should be emphasised. If trust exists, individuals take joint actions, they are prone to cooperate and support those they trust, and trust-based actions enable limiting strict control, which yields economic benefits. Equally important are shared values and norms of those who trust and those whom they trust.

With reference to the public sector, a definition formulated by P. Sztompka (2005) can be used, which states that trust: "is an expectation expressed in action toward the partner (institution) that their reactions will be favourable for us. (...). It often even means a conviction of one of the parties of the fact that the motivation of the other party is being honest and willingness to do good. Trust is a bet made about uncertain future actions of other people or institutions (...). We trust a person – an entity – whom we believe will advise us well, thinking about us, and not about themselves" (Sztompka, 2005, pp. 312, 326). It should be emphasised that trust in public organisations "constitutes a solution for a particular brand of problems connected mainly to the social risk"¹.

Trust is the key notion for the understanding of economic and social reality. Increasingly often it is treated as the fundamental ingredient of society, social capital, or as an organisational resource, psychological state, readiness to accept another person's behaviour, expectation toward other people as well as oneself (Sztompka, 2007; Hardin, 2009; Bugdol, 2010; Kozuch, 2011). Within this understanding, trust becomes an important element of reality, particularly in the world of interdependencies, increased uncertainty and risk, when methods and instruments are sought to ensure effective functioning of organisations, and reliable ways to assess persons, social roles and institutions are in demand. Trust

¹ At this point, we should provide a definition of risk: danger, threat of failure and unfavourable outcomes caused by particular actions we have taken.

enables functioning in the world in a situation where universally accepted norms and rules disappear. It gains particular significance in the sphere of public sector management, where it can become a shared value for all stakeholders working with a public organisation. Due to the character of public organisations, the top priority and at the same time the condition of efficient functioning of such organisations should be maintaining a high level of trust. Trust between public institutions and society can enable their mutual cooperation. On the one hand, citizens should trust public organisations. On the other hand, an appropriate climate of trust in public organisations should enable the development of general social trust.

Profiles of trust in public organisations

Trust constitutes a non-tangible asset of an organisation and it is one of the key elements that guarantee its success and development (Kapuścik, pp. 135-149). Furthermore, it enables building positive relationships in the internal and external environment of an organisation, with various groups of stakeholders.² Trust must exceed the limits of the public organisation operating in the wider context. The priority of a public organisation should be shaping trust for various groups of stakeholders. Therefore, trust is an important tool for effective communication of a public organisation with its environment and stakeholders. Particular groups of stakeholders have various expectations toward an organisation, which change with time and are subject to priorities. According to Hillman and Keim (2011), outcomes of processes in public organisations should balance the needs of various groups of stakeholders (Hillman, Keim, 2011). Public organisations are supposed to create adaptation mechanisms appropriate for the changing environment and expectations of stakeholders. The effectiveness of these mechanisms guarantees the successful functioning of public organisations in their environment. Moreover, trust plays a considerable role in the process of creating informal networks and impacts the shaping of social bonds, which, as a result, contribute to the initiation of various social activities.

Organisations with a high level of trust operate on the basis of ethical and fair practices, they keep their promises. As opposed to organisations with a low level of trust, they are simply reliable. The table below features examples of behaviours of members of an organisation characterised by a high and low level of trust.

² The author adopts the definition formulated by E. Freeman: the stakeholder is "every person or group that can have impact on the particular organisation or, on which the organisation can have impact" [Freeman, Reed 1983].

Table 6.2 Examples of actions taken by members of organisations with a high and low level of trust

| Organisations with a low level of trust | Organisations with a high level of trust |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Distorting or manipulating the facts 2. Concealing information or holding them in store 3. Bending the truth to one's own benefit 4. Rejecting/opposing new ideas. 5. Covering errors and oversights. 6. Conducting many "backroom" conversations 7. Organising "meetings after meetings" 8. Many items "undiscussed" 9. Too many promises, too little actual work. 10. Pretending that bad things did not happen or not admitting them. 11. Feeling unproductive tension – sometimes even anxiety | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Open sharing of information. 2. Tolerance for errors and treating them as a way to learn. 3. Atmosphere of innovation and creativity. 4. Loyalty toward the absent. 5. Speaking directly and discussing existing problems 6. Real communication and cooperation. 7. Willingness to share credit. 8. Not many so-called "meetings after meetings" 9. Transparency as a universally accepted value. 10. High responsibility as the norm of behaviour. |

Source: based on Paliszkievicz, 2013, p. 59.

The nature of the process of building trust in public organisations is multi-dimensional, and it should take into account numerous elements. Table 3 contains a compilation of major factors that shape trust in public institutions.

Table 6.3 Determinants shaping profiles of trust in public organisations

| Determinant | Description |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Shared values | shared beliefs, objectives, norms, behaviours; the greater the convergence of values is, the greater is the commitment of public organisation stakeholders to relationships |
| Communication | the fundamental element of cooperation, maintaining the dialogue, specifying needs, expectations and norms; it can be formalized or not, the important thing is that the parties use a common language and rules of communication |
| Opportunistic behaviours | are connected with one party's aspirations to maximise benefits, objective of the cooperation; they can result also from differences between the expected and obtained advantages of one of the parties in the relationship; failure of the parties to compromise can lead to a decrease in commitment |
| Calculation processes | connected with the analysis of costs and benefits that can be incurred/gained by one of the parties of the relationship, when acting not in keeping with the common interest |
| Abilities | concern competences, capability of relationship entities to fulfil their promises toward the partner; both parties must be certain that stakeholders have sufficient knowledge and resources to achieve the intended objective |
| Predication processes | they are connected with the possibility of predicting the conduct (behaviours) of stakeholders – partners in the relationship |
| Intentions | connected with the ability to interpret behaviours and words in such a way as to make partners in the relationship believe in their mutual good will and the willingness to achieve the intended objective |

Source: based on Zak, 2017.

In the literature, we can find multiple levels of trust analysis. In the context of the present study, it is important to indicate those types of trust that are significant from the perspective of building relationships with public institutions' stakeholders. It is useful to indicate the following types of trust (Bratnicki, Strużyna, 2001; Hopej, 2004; April, 2012):

1. Social – connected with the acceptance of an ethical norm referring to a certain belief, norms of actions adopted in a given society or profession. Social trust stems from cultural features of society that determines honest and cooperation-based behaviour. It is the most general level of trust.
2. Calculation – based on a simple estimation of costs and benefits from a particular relationship. In this respect, trust is based mainly on the calculation of profits and losses of a particular relationship. In this case, the calculation is linked to the analysis of benefits stemming from trust toward a public institution.
3. Institutional – that puts emphasis on formal regulations. Clear rules regarding tasks, rights and responsibilities enable building cooperation based on trust.
4. Perception – understood generally as the process of perception of other people's actions. This type of trust can be based on information obtained from the entity's environment, as well as the observation of internal processes of the entity's functioning. It is related to the assessment of impressions after contacts with a given person or institution.
5. Cumulative – described also as trust based on knowledge. It assumes building trust based on a long-term process of gathering knowledge and gaining experience about the entities' rules of operation.
6. Empathy-based – connected with a low level of assurance. This type of trust is based on the value of establishing a dialogue, and it is connected with a high level of openness, sensitivity, and tolerance.
7. Based on the participation of internal and external stakeholders. It is connected with performing various tasks by members of a particular organisation as well as by external entities. It is connected with a high level of managers' competences with respect to shaping interpersonal relations. The significance of individual features of the members of the organisation and relationships between them are important here.
8. Based on identity and commitment to the execution of the organisation's particular goals. It is shaped on the basis of a high level of shared responsibility, the sense of shared goals and mutual relationship.

In the trust analysis we should also consider what could constitute its sources. The basis for trust may be familiarity resulting from certain stable relationships between the parties (trustee and trusting) calculation based on the estimation of

profits and losses resulting from a given relationship, and value connected with the trustee's adherence to the norm which increases the positive belief in their honesty and good will (Hirsch, 2016, pp. 5-10). The sources of trust can change in the course of the relationship of exchange, and as a result of a cumulation of experiences. Public organisations should take into account all three elements of trust building.

Trust can be treated as a particular kind of faith in the particular entity's principles of operation. This belief is based on the observation of the entity's operational culture and on the way it communicates with its stakeholders. A trustworthy public organisation should be characterised by openness, honesty, reliability, and competences, and it should identify with high moral standards and values. Moreover, it must have precisely determined objectives. It would be useful to indicate factors which can be important for building trust by a public organisation with various groups of stakeholders. Based on the review of the literature, it is possible to indicate several important elements. The most important ones among them are (Benson-Armer, Stickel, pp. 20-26; Grudzewski et al. 2009, p. 166; Wereda 2015, p. 221):

- Trust can limit weaknesses in various situations.
- Trust can provide a buffer for the risk and learning from mistakes.
- Trust should be built by displaying confidence in employee competences and intentions, and by limiting prejudice, expressing respect and establishing mutual expectations of the parties.
- Trust should not be blind (unconditional).
- Trust is not permanent.
- Trust can be built not only based on past experiences, but also predicted future actions of the organisation.
- Trust can reduce uncertainty through strict specification of employees' roles and shared value systems, as well as through communication and the way it is shaped.
- Trust can be built not only long-term, as a result of gathered experience, but also in short-term through the execution of short-term goals.
- Trust should be built intentionally.
- Trust building is accelerated by indicating detailed rules of cooperation and providing concrete results of work.
- Confidence is the feature of the trusting entity, whereas the commitment concerns the entity in which trust is placed, in this case – the public organisation.
- Trust is one of the quality assessment criteria of relationships between various stakeholder groups and the public institution.

- A positively evaluated public entity is considered a trustworthy partner. A positive assessment of the partner is equal with the expectation of their kindness, as well as honest and responsible actions.
- In relationships conducive to trust, the emphasis is shifted from dictating actions to expecting results.

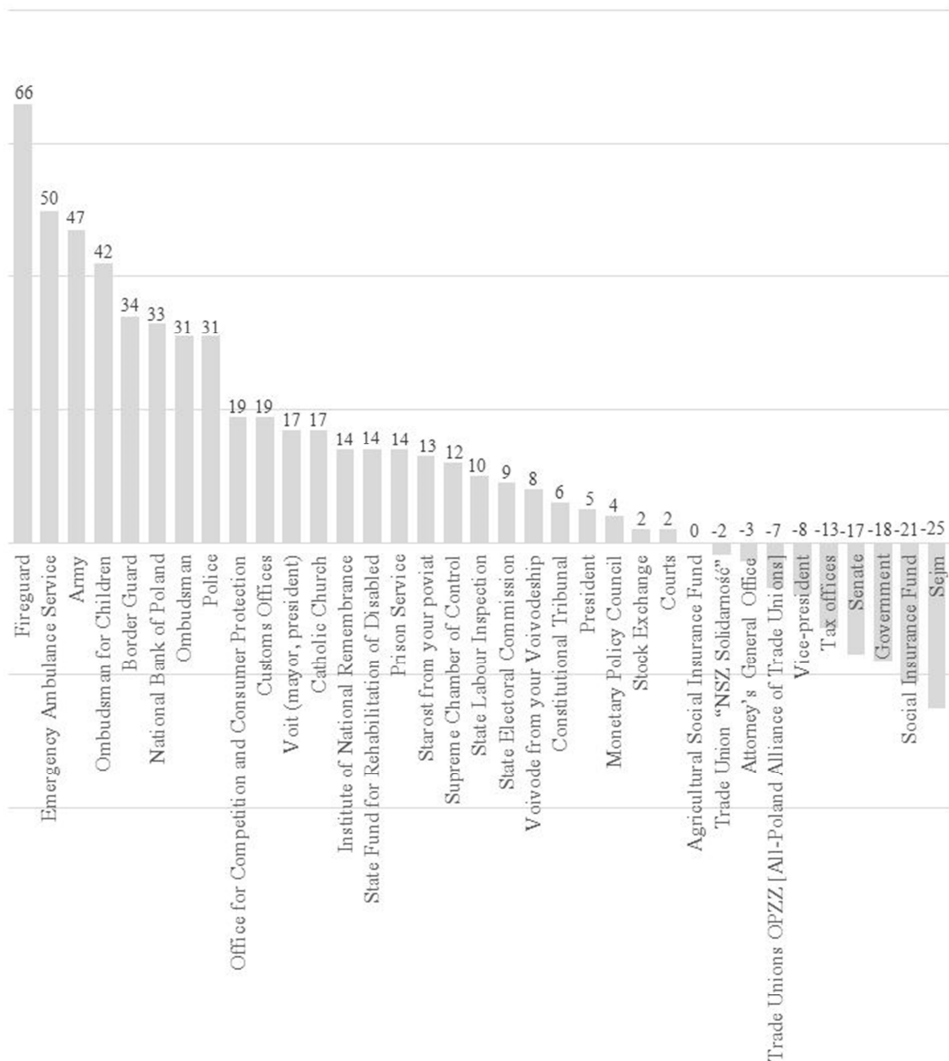
Trust should become the key resource of a public organisation that cannot be substituted. Modern societies increasingly often indicate the importance of honesty and open communication between the parties in the relationship. The indicated features condition building and maintaining an appropriate level of mutual trust. Public organisations should influence the trust that is placed in them. They can achieve this by: the capability (skills) to perform certain actions, kindness that engenders acting in the good interest of the parties, and honesty resulting from the consequences of abiding by specific rules (Sankowska, 2012, p. 3). Trust-building strategies should involve all groups of public organisations' stakeholders on various levels. Through shaping trust in themselves, public organisations influence general behaviour and create the conditions for the development of the climate of trust.

The level of trust in the public sector – a review of research results

In Poland, the level of trust is systematically monitored. There are studies available on general social trust as well as trust in various institutions. Some of the available studies include those carried out by CBOS Public Opinion Research Center, TNS Global, a report "Diagnoza Społeczna" (Social Diagnosis), and the results of a trust survey in an international cross-section conducted by the Edelman Trust.

Polish society is characterised by a low level of trust in state institutions and public sphere organisations (Figure 1). Moreover, Poles declare a relatively low level of general trust in comparison with other countries (Figure 2).

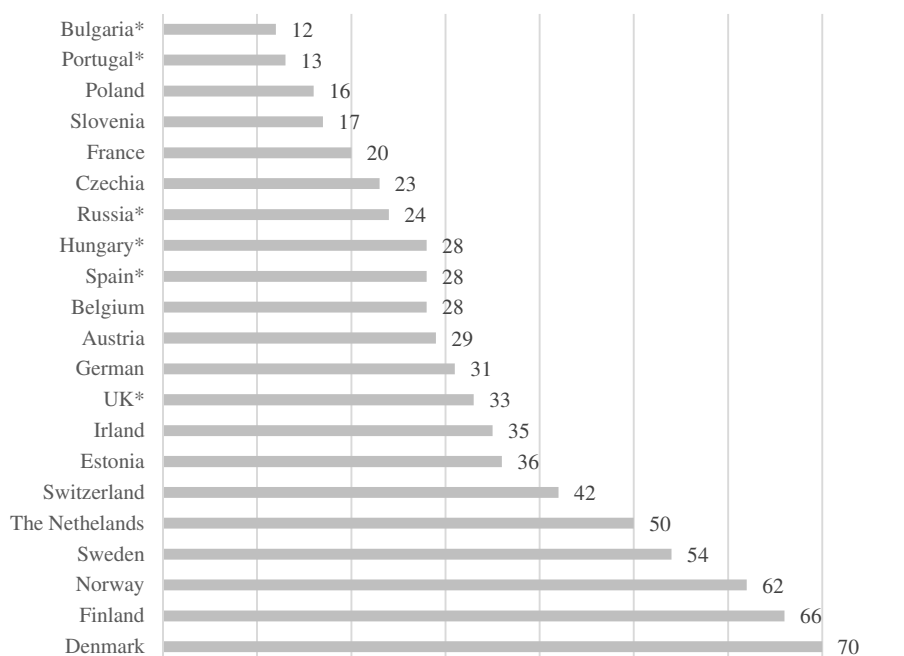
The low level of trust in public institutions among Poles is also indicated by studies carried out by the Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS) in 2016. Entities which enjoy the most trust are the military (79%), the police (65%), local/communal authorities (64%), and the Polish Ombudsman (63%). Slightly less Poles trust public administration officials (50%), and courts (45%). Poles place the least trust in the government (38%), the Constitutional Tribunal (37%), and the Sejm (lower house of the Polish parliament), and Senate (30%).

Figure 6.1 Net trust* in public institutions in Poland in 2016

*net trust in pp: percentage of answers "definitely agree" plus "mostly agree" minus the percentage of answers "definitely disagree" and "mostly disagree".

Source: based on *Trust in public institutions, a comparison from the years 2006, 2010 and 2016* Kantar Public http://www.tnsglobal.pl/archiwumraportow/files/2016/11/K.068_Zaufanie_do_instytucji_O10a-16.pdf; (27.04.2017).

Figure 6.2 The percentage of people aged 16 or older who trust other people – comparison of various countries in 2006, 2012 and 2014



*data from 2012

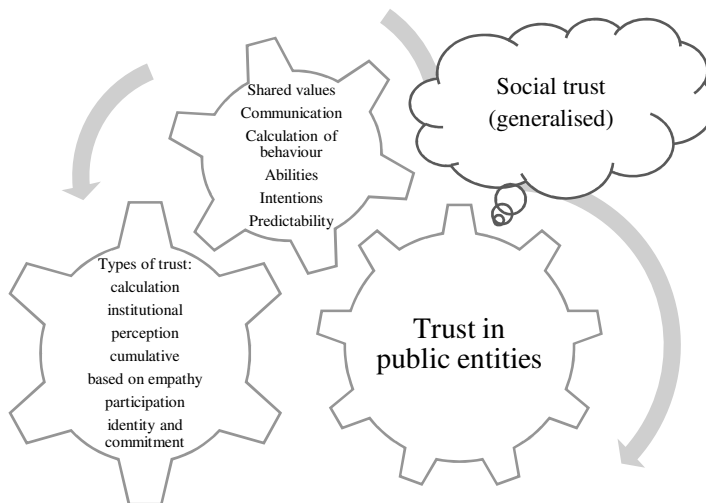
Source: based on Social Diagnosis 2015, electronic document:
http://www.diagnoza.com/pliki/raporty/Diagnoza_raport_2015.pdf, accessed (27.04.2017).

Summary

Trust is an indispensable value for the functioning of public organisations and it should become its key organisational resource that cannot be replaced. Modern societies increasingly often indicate the importance of honesty and open communication between the parties in the relationship. Public institutions should pay attention to trust in the relationship between the entity and its stakeholders, but also in inter-organisational relationships. The process of building trust is difficult and lengthy. Public organisations should build trust both in themselves and generalised (social) trust.

Public organisations can build trust through several elements and on various levels. Figure 3 presents a compilation of the levels of building trust by public organisations.

Figure 6.3 Levels of building trust by public organisations – types and determinants building trust



Source: own work.

The notion of trust concerns many elements, such as: expectations, relying on someone, risk, probability, and uncertainty. Trust enables cooperation between entities and its stakeholders on various grounds. A high level of trust in public organisation can facilitate the process of providing public services. Entities that believe that public organisations act in their interest, do not have any hidden agenda and attempt to achieve the intended objectives in the best possible way, will be able to trust them. Trusting stakeholders will believe that public organisations operate in the best possible way. Public organisations should build trust based on various elements, at various levels of trust. Managing trust in public organisations should constitute a deliberate and continuous process that cannot be imposed or regulated with legal procedures. Conditions for generating trust in public organisations should take into account the following factors:

1. Public organisations and society must be sure that the goal of the action are shared values.
2. Shared values must be clearly translated into concrete objectives of a public organisation's activities.
3. Expectations of public entities and society must be complementary (match one another).
4. Trust must be reasonable and verifiable with empirical information and particular actions of public institutions.

The determinants listed above should be subject to constant assessment by public organisations.

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